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DOE Regional Science Bowl Draws 18 Teams from SRS Area, Local Team Takes First Place

AIKEN, S.C., February 24, 2021 – Future scientists, engineers and mathematicians tested their knowledge during the annual Department of Energy Savannah River Regional Science Bowl Competition on Feb. 20. The virtual event attracted 18 teams from the Savannah River Site (SRS) area.

Lakeside High School, Evans, Georgia, was the winning team from this year's regional Science Bowl and earned the honor to compete in the national competition to be held virtually in May.

Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, High School, Hartsville, South Carolina, came in second, while third place was achieved by Nations Ford, Fort Mill, South Carolina.

During the day-long event, tension and excitement were evident as team members knew that every correct answer provided to questions in the competition brought them a step closer to representing their school and region at the national level.

"This was our first year conducting this event virtually," said Kim Mitchell, Lead, Education Outreach, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS). "Students usually compete head-to-head, with the first to hit the buzzer earning the right to answer the question. In a virtual setting, teams compete individually answering questions within a timed interval to achieve the top score for that round."



Savannah River Nuclear Solutions employees (from left) Tim Arnold, Kim Mitchell and Taylor Rice manage the control center for this year's (virtual) DOE Savannah River Regional Science Bowl competition, remotely coordinating the day-long event

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Mitchell noted that new rules and procedures were established for the event to be held virtually this year.

“Changing everything to adapt to a virtual platform was a very big challenge. Accepting this challenge ensured the Savannah River Regional Science Bowl continued our long tradition of offering an academic competition that is like no other,” Mitchell said.

Science Bowl questions cover a wide range of disciplines, including biology, chemistry, earth and space science, physics, energy and mathematics.

“The competition provides these students an opportunity to showcase their knowledge. But even more importantly, it allows them to continue their learning,” said Crystal McDowell, Life Science Educator at Greenbrier High School in Evans, Georgia. “These students research, read and discover outside of what they are required to learn. They enjoy deepening their knowledge and understanding of science and math.”

Science Bowl teams consist of three to five students and an educator who serves as an adviser and coach. This year’s regional contest involved 86 students from 12 high schools and is the only academic competition of its kind that tests students’ knowledge in all areas of science and is sponsored by a federal agency.

“The adrenaline high the students get from competing can be as good as if they were in a varsity game or performing in the school musical, but in a STEM context,” said Robert Lascola, a Senior Fellow Scientist with the Savannah River National Laboratory. “It’s reinforcing for them to have their preparation rewarded with a good match. They also get experience thinking quickly while under pressure and working in a team environment.”

SRS is one of only three DOE sites to have participated each year at the regional level since the start of the Science Bowl competition.

DOE created the National Science Bowl (NSB) in 1991 to encourage students to excel in mathematics and science and pursue careers in those fields. Approximately 300,000 students have participated in the NSB throughout its 30-year history.

“I’m very grateful to SRNS for putting on the regional Science Bowl competition,” said Brian Spensley, a Chemistry and Physics teacher at Aiken High School. “In a normal year, it takes considerable effort to organize teams from schools across the state and Central Savannah River Area, and in this COVID year their efforts have been extraordinary.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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